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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [IS](#) [BE](#)  
SUBJECT: BELGIUM: JEWISH LEADERS CONCERNED BY ANTI-SEMITISM  
AND ISRAEL'S SECURITY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: A diverse range of opinions were voiced at the October 21 Jewish Leader roundtable. Anti-Semitism in Belgium expresses itself through youth violence and a common fear of wearing Jewish religious symbols in public since the second intifada in 2000. At one tenth the size of the Muslim community in Belgium, Jews lack public political support and face an anti-Israel bias in the media. The community is concerned with the Obama Administration's policies not being sufficiently "pro-Israel." END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador Howard Gutman hosted 22 diverse leaders of the fragmented Jewish Community of Belgium on October 21. For even-handed Jewish outreach, the group recommended that he address both the Flemish and Francophone Jewish communities. The group's main concerns were anti-Semitism in Belgium and support for Israel.

#### Background on Jewish Community in Belgium

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¶3. (SBU) Approximately 40,000 Jews currently live in Belgium. The Jews are geographically fragmented with an estimated 20,000 in Brussels, 10,000 in Antwerp, 5,000 in Liege and 5,000 in Ghent. The community is also divided into many segments, from reform to ultra-orthodox. The two main umbrella organizations in Belgium are the Coordinating Committee of Jewish Organizations in Belgium (CCOJB) for Wallonia and Brussels and the Forum of Jewish Organizations (FORUM) for Flanders. Outsiders see the community as still "wounded", due to the loss of half the Jews in Belgium in the holocaust during the Second World War.

#### Anti-Semitism in Belgium

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¶4. (SBU) The group said that anti-Semitism in Belgium manifested itself mainly through youth violence. Fear of violence in Brussels from Muslim youth often prevents the Jewish community in less of a concern. Anti-@ `pol carticians to the communis

asserted that the Belanti-Israel, and,  
by  
Qwards Jewish Belgians,' reluctance to publicHowever,  
in private joys considerable  
influQ

the Belgian Prime Minister Van Rompuy choosing to speak at  
the 50th  
Anniversary of a Jewish organisation (CCLJ) over attending  
Ambassador Gutman's welcome reception. In addition, the  
Belgian  
government led significant restitution efforts to restore  
confiscated finances in the Belgian banking sector to  
survivors in  
the Jewish community.

Concerns about the Obama Administration

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¶7. (SBU) The group was united in support of Israel. There  
were  
general concerns as to whether President Obama would apply  
even  
pressure on both the Palistians and Israelis, while  
attempting to  
broker peace in the Middle East. The group was also worried  
by the  
increasing Iranian security threat towards Israel and wanted  
to  
learn more about the Obama Administration's policy on this  
issue.

GUTMAN

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